

Tennessee Authorizer and Charter School Interim Review Guidance

5 year review

Introduction

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-121(d), the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) shall develop guidelines for local education agency (LEA) authorizers and charter schools to facilitate the five-year interim review process. The following information is approved for this purpose.

In Tennessee, charter agreements are established for ten-year periods. Best practice for chartering authorities includes monitoring and meaningful feedback with charter schools on an annual basis during the charter term. In addition to annual reviews, strong interim reviews are a vital component in providing effective oversight of charter schools and sharing best practices across all schools within the charter authorizer's jurisdiction.

Tennessee state law requires LEA authorizers to conduct an interim review, every five years, of each charter school authorized by the LEA.

T.C.A. § 49-13-121(d):

An interim review of a charter school shall be conducted by the chartering authority under guidelines developed by the department of education in the fifth year of a charter school's initial period of operation and also in the fifth year following any renewal of a charter agreement. Such guidelines shall require a charter school to submit to the chartering authority a report on the progress of the school in achieving the goals, objectives, pupil performance standards, content standards and other terms of the approved charter agreement.

The interim review should take place during the fifth year of operation for each charter school and then in the fifth year following any renewal decisions.

This document is presented in two sections:

1. Guidelines for LEA Authorizers - including a sample interim review template Pages 2 - 4
2. Guidelines for Charter Schools - including submission instructions Pages 5 - 6

Guidelines for LEA Authorizers

The interim review is intended to be a rigorous review of a charter school's performance and progress toward meeting the performance goals stated in the charter contract, including essential compliance requirements. The results of the interim review should be clearly communicated to the school's leadership and governing board and must be used by the chartering authority when making renewal, nonrenewal, or revocation decisions. Interim reviews provide the authorizer with an opportunity to review overall renewal status with the charter school. The authorizer should be prepared to initiate revocation based on the results of an interim review if indicated by the review. Through the process of the interim review, charter schools should be informed whether they are:

1. On track for renewal,
2. Off track, at risk of non-renewal, or
3. Severely off track, at risk of revocation.

The scope and level of an interim review shall be similar to the review conducted at the end of a school's charter term that is used to determine whether to renew the charter contract.

As soon as practical following the interim review, the chartering authority should report back to the charter school and the TDOE their decision on each charter school's renewal status.

Charter school authorizers must adhere to T.C.A. § 49-13-122 concerning automatic revocation and nonrenewal of a charter school:

(a) (1) A charter agreement shall be revoked or denied renewal by the final chartering authority if the department of education identifies the charter school as a priority school, as defined by the state's accountability system pursuant to § 49-1-602. The revocation shall take effect immediately following the close of the school year after the school is identified as a priority school.

(2) A charter agreement, including the charter agreement of any charter school identified as a priority school on the department's 2015 priority schools list approved by the state board of education on August 26, 2014, shall not be revoked or denied renewal under subdivision (a)(1) unless the department identifies the charter school as a priority school on a list approved by the state board in 2017 or in a year thereafter.

(3) Nothing in this subsection (a) shall prohibit a chartering authority from revoking or denying renewal of a charter agreement of a charter school that fails to meet the minimum performance requirements set forth in the charter agreement.

Additionally pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-122(g), the chartering authority shall have a procedure in place for the closure of a charter school prior to the decision to deny renewal or revoke a charter agreement.

The following table shows information that may be of particular interest to chartering authorities at each stage of a charter school's existence.*

Category	Application	Pre-Opening	Annual Report	Interim Review (5 years)	Renewal Application
Academics	Academic program and capacity	Staffing and implemented plan to serve all students	Academic achievement	Cumulative progress towards academic goals	Cumulative academic data Academic program
Personnel	School leader (process & qualifications) Staffing plan Staff training plan	Staff licenses, background checks	Leadership changes	Succession plans Teacher retention Teacher evaluation	Stability independent of any one leader
Governance	Governance structure Board training plans	Board changes	Board changes	Board adapted from startup to maintaining	Board changes
Facilities	Facilities plans	Certificate of occupancy		Facility changes	Facility changes
Operations	Community outreach Organizational structure Technology, food service, and transportation plans	Community ties Record retention plans Insurance Enrollment	Operational compliance Student mobility	Organizational or structural changes Functioning community partnerships Enrollment	Organizational or structural changes Solid community connections Enrollment
Financials	Budget Financial procedures	Budget based on actual enrollment	Financial sustainability	Financial projections Financial efficiency (return on investment)	Financial projections

*LEA authorizers may require additional information and documentation other than the items listed above.

The following sample authorizer template may be used during interim reviews.



Sample authorizer template for 5 year interim review

School _____

District _____

Date Interim Review Materials Received from School _____

Date of Review with School _____

Attendees:

____ School Principal

____ School Financial Officer

____ Other School Administrator _____ (name) _____ (position)

____ LEA Director of Schools

____ Chief Financial Officer for LEA

____ Other District Administrator _____ (name) _____ (position)

____ Other Attendee(s) _____

Interim Review (5 years)	Severely Off Track	Off Track	On Track	Exceeding Target
Cumulative progress towards academic goals				
Succession plans				
Teacher retention				
Teacher evaluation				
Board adapted from startup to maintaining				
Facility changes				
Organizational or structural changes				
Functioning community partnerships				
Enrollment				
Financial projections				
Financial efficiency (return on investment)				

Overall Renewal Status:

____ On track for Renewal

____ Off track, risk of non-renewal

____ Severely off track, risk of revocation

Guidelines for Charter School Operators

Charter school operators should use interim reviews to measure progress toward the goals outlined in their charter, adjust operations based on this information, and gauge the likelihood of renewal of their charters. Tennessee law requires that the interim review include a report from the charter school on the progress of the school in achieving the goals, objectives, pupil performance standards, content standards and other terms of the approved charter agreement.

The charter school may use information from annual reports, performance frameworks, or other instruments to complete the interim review.

Interim Review Submission Instructions

Each charter school shall complete each section below adhering to maximum page limitations. Charter schools should check with the chartering authority to determine any additional LEA requirements for the interim review. An electronic copy of the completed interim review report shall be submitted to the chartering authority and the TDOE (charter.school@tn.gov) no later than December 1 of the charter school's fifth operational year.

The interim review report must include the following:

Cover page

Provide a cover page that includes the school name, address, phone number, school contact information, (name, title, email address, phone number), year school was authorized, year school opened, and date of report.

Section I

Cumulative progress toward the charter school's goals (including academic achievement) (2 pages maximum)

1. Summarize the progress toward achieving the charter school's goals, objectives, pupil performance standards, and content standards.
2. Include academic achievement, illustrated by the information provided in annual reports for the years since the charter was granted or renewed.
3. Provide goal and academic achievement projections for the next five years.

Section II

Operations and finance (10 pages maximum, including any attachments)

1. Explain how you have developed or plan to establish a pipeline of potential teachers and leaders for the school for the next several years (as applicable).
2. Provide current student enrollment numbers and enrollment projections for the next five years.
3. Explain how the organization anticipates making up any gap between actual expenses and anticipated recurring per pupil state, local and federal revenue during the next five years.
4. If the school has moved or plans to move to a different facility since authorization or renewal, describe how that move has or will affected school operations.

Section III

Leadership succession (2 pages maximum)

1. Describe how the board membership has changed since authorization or renewal. Explain how these changes are or will contribute to the operational stability of the school, and the academic achievement of students.
2. Explain what the school has done to ensure organizational stability even if one or more founders or other key leaders leave.